

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

HONOLULU

May 3, 2005

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIONS TO SENATE BILL NO. 74

Honorable Members
Twenty-Third Legislature
State of Hawaii

Pursuant to Section 16 of Article III of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii, I am returning herewith, without my approval, Senate Bill No. 74, entitled "A Bill for an Act Relating to Highway Safety."

The purpose of this bill is to allow drivers who are at least eighteen years of age to be issued commercial driver's licenses to drive in intrastate commerce, except vehicles to be used in the (1) transportation of passengers in school vehicles, (2) operation of larger trailer-type vehicles (over 26,100 GVW), and (3) transportation of hazardous materials.

I am vetoing this measure based on extensive research that has unequivocally demonstrated it is not sound public policy to use inexperienced drivers to operate large commercial vehicles. The data come from studies of young truck drivers overseas and in those few states that legally permit drivers under age 21 to operate trucks in intrastate commerce.

Numerous studies compiled by the National Center for Statistics and analysis have documented that younger drivers have more accidents. For example, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, the rate of motor vehicle deaths per 100,000 drivers age 18 to 20 was nearly twice that of drivers ages 21 and older. Studies of young people driving

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIONS
SENATE BILL NO. 74
Page 2

trucks show that there are 4.3 to 6.2-fold increase in the fatal crash risk among drivers younger than 21. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety along with the Center for Army Lessons Learned reported that during Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield soldiers younger than 21 were hospitalized for motor vehicle accidents five times more often than soldiers 40 years or older. A 1996 University of Michigan study found younger truck drivers have more moving violations than those at an older age and a higher proportion of accidents involving loss of vehicle control.

The issue of how old a person must be to drive a large truck or bus has been debated frequently at the national level. Federal statutes require that drivers must be at least 21 years of age to qualify to drive interstate commercial vehicles. This rule was reaffirmed as a federal policy as recently as 2003. Forty-four states recognize the same standard for intrastate vehicles.

Despite efforts by the Legislature to restrict the types of commercial vehicles younger drivers could operate in Hawaii, this legislation contradicts the premise behind the graduated driver's license program. That program recognizes that younger drivers are prone to take more risks and jeopardize both themselves and others on our roadways.

While the industry is understandably concerned with the shortage of commercial drivers, there is no demonstrated evidence this bill would alleviate these concerns. On balance,

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIONS
SENATE BILL NO. 74
Page 3

the safety and welfare of the people of Hawaii must be our first and foremost priority.

For the foregoing reasons, I am returning Senate Bill No. 74 without my approval.

Respectfully,

LINDA LINGLE
Governor of Hawaii